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ABSTRACT

The Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL), in South Carolina, is one of eight pilot community colleges involved in the Academy for Community College Leadership Advancement, Innovation, and Modeling (ACCLAIM). ACCLAIM is a demonstration project involving colleges in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina concerned with expanding the colleges' role in community-based programming (CBP), and includes such components as a continuing education program for college staff, an interdisciplinary doctoral degree program in community college leadership, the development of program materials, and a faculty renewal program. At TCL, implementation of CBP relied heavily on the continuing education program, with 18 faculty, staff, and administrators participating in five 3-day retreats in 1992-93 to develop the skills needed to implement CBP. Another crucial element was the formation of an Environmental Scanning Committee (ESC), a diverse, 17-member body providing data on current and emerging issues affecting the quality of life in the college's service area. To date, the ESC has identified the role of intergovernmental affairs, the economy, education, the environment, health, quality of life, and the infrastructure as important regional issues. For each issue, a target public will be identified and coalitions will be formed to develop consensus on plans of action and implementation, with the college providing leadership. CBP has helped TCL be both a leader and partner in addressing key community issues and enabled it to serve the community more effectively. (KP)

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by

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Technical College of the Lowcountry

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Moving Teaching and Learning Into the Twenty-first Century Through Community-Based Programming

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The Technical College of the Lowcountry is one of sixteen technical colleges comprising the South Carolina Technical College System. None of our colleges carry the name community college, but all sixteen are in reality comprehensive community colleges.

The Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL) serves a geographic region where the economy is service based. It is truly a beautiful region, sitting oceanfront on the east, marked with the intracoastal waterway, tidal streams, and marshes in four sparsely populated counties comprising a 2,900 square mile area in the southeastern corner of South Carolina. Included in the region are the

startling contrasts of the posh resort of Hilton Head Island and three counties with illiteracy rates exceeding 35% of the adult population. The same water that contributes to the beauty of the area greatly inhibits transportation; Beaufort County, in which the major population centers of the towns of Beaufort and Hilton Head lie, is composed of 64 major sea islands.

The student body at TCL has increased from 916 students in the Fall of 1987 to 1,578 students this Spring semester.

A current profile of the student body shows that the College has an enrollment comprised of 69% female, average age of 32, and 42% minority, with 37% African-American.

Many students are the first in their families to attend college, some have just graduated from high school, some are working adults, and some are unemployed.

Approximately 70% of TCL's students attend part-time.

Thus, in many ways, TCL, like your college, serves non-traditional students.

Since their inception, community colleges have been tied closely to the communities that they serve. Because of these close ties to the community, when many people involved in the community college movement initially hear discussion of community based programming, it seems merely to formalize what the community college has been doing all along. But in reality community based programming involves far more than merely formalizing existing practices.

The Technical College of the Lowcountry is one of eight pilot community colleges involved in an exciting project that encompasses four states. The Academy for Community College Leadership Advancement, Innovation, and Modeling (ACCLAIM) includes Maryland, Virginia,

South Carolina, and North Carolina. The collaborative effort is funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, North Carolina State University (NCSU), and the community college system of each of the four states. Housed in the Department of Adult and Community College Education at NCSU, the program is a demonstration project showing how to reposition the 114 community colleges in the Region through modifying and expanding their missions to assume a leadership role in community-based programming. In this expanded role the colleges will serve as activists and catalysts in effecting collaboration among the people and their leaders, and community-based organizations within their respective service areas or communities as leaders identify and seek solutions to current and emerging issues of critical concern.

While the ACCLAIM project consists of four major

components, and I will briefly list those components, my comments today focus on the community-based programming activities at the Technical College of the Lowcountry. The four components constituting the ACCLAIM project to promote community-based programming include (1) a continuing education program to assist community college administrators, faculty, governance officials, and community leaders as community-based programming becomes a central and essential function of the 114 community colleges in the four-state region, (2) an interdisciplinary doctoral degree program in community college leadership with 12 to 14 fellowships awarded annually to present and prospective community college leaders with emphasis on women and minorities, (3) the development, testing and dissemination of community-based programming materials, instructional aids, guides, and management tools, (4) a collaborative

faculty enrichment and renewal program to serve the professorate in university education programs which provide graduate instruction and continuing education to community college professionals.

Implementing the community-based programming at the Technical College of the Lowcountry depended heavily upon the continuing education program. During the 1992-93 academic year, eighteen TCL faculty, staff, and administrators participated in five three-day retreats for intensive discussion about community based programming. Also participating in these retreats was the chairman of the Technical College of the Lowcountry Commission, the college's governing board.

These institutes assisted the TCL community to develop the expertise, the skills necessary, to implement community-based programming activities. In the institutes, participants learned techniques for identifying

issues that are of critical concern to the people in the college's service area. These issues, then, become the basis for study, analysis, and mapping of the publics affected by them. Next an effort is made to identify and engage key leaders of the community and leaders of other agencies and organizations which are stakeholders in the issue. The goal is to have these leaders reach consensus on the issue, plan for its resolution, and commit to an agreed-upon plan of action.

This year a second cohort of TCL faculty, staff, and administrators have participated in the institutes along with two more members of the TCL Commission. The institutes have been modified to include sessions both in a retreat setting and on campus--three two-day sessions off campus for this year's participants and three one-day sessions on campus for both last year's participants and this year's participants.

As a college begins to implement community-based programming, one of the first steps involved is to review and, if necessary, revise the college's mission so that it includes community based programming. When community-based programming was being implemented at TCL, the Technical College Lowcountry was also simultaneously preparing for a Reaffirmation Visit from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and since part of this preparation for the Reaffirmation process of accreditation traditionally is to review and, if necessary, to revise the college's mission, this step was taken early in TCL's participation in ACCLAIM. In early 1992 as part of the Self-Study process the College revised its mission statement and in the process of creating the new mission discussed community based programming, determining that the revised mission was inclusive of community based programming. In 1993 still

during the Self-Study process the mission was modified again slightly to ensure that it adequately included student services.

After the college has reviewed and, if necessary, modified its mission to include community based programming, the next major step in implementing community based programming is forming an Environmental Scanning Committee.

In implementing community based programming, the Environmental Scanning Committee is key. Having the right individuals and the right organizations represented on the committee is essential.

TCL's seventeen member Environmental Scanning Committee is representative of the College's service area. The majority of the members, like the majority of the students at TCL, are from Beaufort County. However, each of the other three counties that the College serves

is represented on the Committee. The Committee reflects diversity; there are three African-American women, two African-American men, three white women, and nine white men on the Committee.

Because of their unique backgrounds, the individuals on the Environmental Scanning Committee provide a wealth of knowledge and information about the Lowcountry. Serving on the Committee are both the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission of the Technical College of the Lowcountry, the Beaufort County Administrator, the Executive Director of Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health Services, the former commander of the Marine Corps Air Station at Beaufort, the Clemson Extension agent, a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, a Superintendent from one school district, and the assistant Superintendent of another school district, and a member of Beaufort County

Development Board who also chairs the Military Enhancement Committee. Several members of TCL's faculty and staff and participants in the first year's institutes serve as resource persons to the Environmental Scanning Committee.

In community-based programming the process of environmental scanning focuses on the "identification, study, and analysis of current and emerging issues and forces that are impacting on people and their quality of life."

To date, TCL's Environmental Scanning Committee has identified seven community life issues. The issues are intergovernmental affairs, economy, education, environment, health, quality of life, and infrastructure.

Currently, the Community Life Study Committees at TCL are addressing these issues by identifying various sources of information for each issue. The Study

Committees are reporting to the full Environmental Scanning Committee about their progress. When all of the Study Committees have completed their work, then the full Environmental Scanning Committee will decide what issue that the committee as a whole should address.

Once the issue has been identified, then the Environmental Scanning Committee will identify the targeted public for that issue, the group of people who are or will be directly impacted by the issue. Stakeholders, those individuals who also have a vested interest in what happens to the target public, will also be identified.

If the community based programming activity works as it is designed, the college will serve as the leader in building the consensus or general agreement on the issue being real, one that actually impacts the quality of life in

the College's service area. At this stage a coalition of the target public and significant other publics should begin to emerge.

Through its leadership, the college then creates the setting for the leaders of the coalition to become deeply involved in a thorough study and analysis of the issue and the situation from which the issue came to life. Decisions should be made on a plan of action for resolving the issue or moving toward resolution of the issue. Such decisions should define the goals to be attained and the educational/change strategy for working to attain these goals. These decisions also include agreement and commitment from the leaders of the coalition as to what their respective agency or organization will do in the coordinated team effort in implementing the agreed-upon plan of action.

At this point you may be asking "What is the role of

the community college in this process?" The college provides leadership for the coalition in determining the plan of action, in scheduling various aspects of the plan of action, and in actually implementing the plan of action. The college also provides leadership for the coalition in assessing the final outcome achieved through the plan of action in resolving or alleviating the issue.

What does all of this have to do with teaching and learning and why would a community college want to be involved in these activities? Aren't our plates full enough already? Just how does community based programming fit onto this already full plate?

Most community colleges have the word community in their name for a reason; they are the community's college. The South Carolina Technical Colleges, as I mentioned earlier, are the exception to this norm. Community based programming will assist any

community college to better meet the needs of the communities that it serves. Most community colleges use advisory committees to tie their programmatic offerings to the businesses and industries that they serve, but community-based programming really ties the college to the communities being served. Instead of using members of the community in an advisory role, the members of the community serve as active and equal partners in addressing key issues. Instead of further crowding our already crowded plate, community based programming provides the college the means to reposition itself in the community simultaneously as both a leader and a partner.

As we work to implement community-based programming at the Technical College of the Lowcountry, community based programming is assisting the college to move teaching and learning in the Lowcountry into the

Twenty-First Century. It is assisting our college to be both a leader and a partner in addressing key issues in our communities. Quite simply, community-based programming is enabling us to serve our communities more effectively.